

Justice Cornelius Ramsey House  
252 West Seventh Street  
St. Paul  
Ramsey County  
Minnesota

HABS No. MINN-47

HABS  
MINN  
62-SAIPA  
9-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. MINN-47

## JUSTICE CORNELIUS RAMSEY HOUSE

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Address: 252 West Seventh Street, St. Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota.

Present Owner: Mr. George Wilm, 250 West Seventh Street, St. Paul.

Present Use: Furniture storage.

Statement of Significance: This small stone residence, one of the oldest remaining structures in the city of St. Paul, was built in 1851.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

## 1. Original and subsequent owners:

1847 - First sale after the United States Government grant--property purchased by John R. Irvines and Nancy/his wife.

1849 - John R. Irvines and Nancy/his wife sold the property (then 35 acres of ground known as Fort Street and Irvines Creek) to Henry H. Sibley, then Governor of Minnesota, Henry M. Rice, real estate dealer, and Justice C. Ramsey - price, \$60.00..

1849-50 - Henry H. Sibley and Henry M. Rice conveyed part of the property to Justice C. Ramsey.

1850-1933 - Title information not determined

1933 - to present - property purchased and occupied by George Wilm.

## 2. Date of erection: 1851.

## 3. Builders: Masonry work by Ezra Cook and William Beaumette; carpentry work by J. R. Lumbeck.

## 4. Notes on original plan and construction of building: The original building was rectangular in plan with two rooms on the ground floor, two-foot thick stone bearing walls and timber framed gable roof.

## 5. Notes on known alterations and additions: Two small rectangular windows have been added in the northeast (side elevation) and the sash and frames of the windows

in the northwest (front) and southeast (rear) elevations have been modernized. The interior finishes were heavily remodeled about 1945.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with Building:

Justice Cornelius Ramsey, older brother of Minnesota Governor Alexander Ramsey, was born in Hummelstown, Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, in 1821; received a common school education, learned the printer's trade, and worked on the survey of the line for the Pennsylvania Railroad. He came to St. Paul in 1849, and was elected in 1850 to serve as a member of the territorial Legislature. Re-elected in 1853 and 1857, Ramsey later served in several other government posts. An enterprising businessman, Ramsey invested successfully in the real estate field, often with his brother, and died in 1881 with a fortune of \$200,000.

C. Sources of Information: Koeper, H. F. Historic St. Paul Buildings. A report of the Historic Sites Committee, a special citizens group named by the St. Paul City Planning Board. St. Paul: St. Paul Planning Board, 1964.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Ramsey House is a good example of a type of house built by early settlers, of some means, in the Minnesota Territory, and St. Paul in particular.
2. Condition of fabric: The exterior stone work is in good condition. The window frames, sash, and interior finishes have been completely remodeled and are also in good condition.

B. Detailed Description of Exterior

1. Number of stories, over-all dimensions, layout: One story; 15'-10" wide x approximately 25' long; rectangular in plan, with gable roof.
2. Foundations: Rubble limestone.
3. Wall construction finish, and color: Coursed ashlar of local light gray quarry-faced limestone, laid up with lime mortar and pointed with modern cement (stained dark gray).
4. Structural system, framing: Masonry bearing walls (two foot thick) with timber floor and roof framing.

5. Chimneys: One small square brick chimney located at the mid-point in the ridge of the gable roof.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Two doorways, one at the center of each end elevation (3'-1" x 6'-11" masonry opening with cut limestone lintels [10" x 3'-8"], deeply recessed frame and paneled reveals, six-light glazed and paneled doors that are not original).
  - b. Windows: Two tall rectangular windows flank the door in each end elevation (2'-10" x 6'-4" masonry openings with limestone lintels, projecting sills, recessed wood frames and plain board reveals, six-light-over-six light double-hung wooden sash (that are not original). Two modern window openings in the northeast (side) elevation (18-light wooden sash with recessed wooden frames and exposed stone reveals).
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with modern asphalt shingles.
  - b. Cornice: Simple projecting cornice (cyma recta molding) with plain board soffit and 12" bargeboard.
- C. Description of Interior: The interior of the house was not accessible at the time of this report. The original plan of the first floor has been generally maintained (two rooms divided by a center partition) but all of the interior finishes have been altered. The original butternut paneling has been replaced by modern plaster, and a large round arched opening has been cut in the center partition.
- D. Site: The house faces northwest on West Seventh Street, a broad commercial street on the outskirts of downtown St. Paul. The building is located in the side yard of an antique shop and is recessed about 35' from the sidewalk line. A one-story commercial garage butts flat up against the southwest elevation of the structure.

Prepared by John D. Milner, Architect  
National Park Service  
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